

Gen. John Craddock
Opening Remarks
Caribbean Nations Security Conference
(CANSEC 2005)
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Thank you ladies and gentlemen and good morning.

Before I begin-- I'd like to thank Secretary Pared and our Dominican counterparts for hosting this important meeting here in Santo Domingo. This is the sixth time the U.S. Southern Command has had the opportunity to participate in this particular conference and the fifth time it has been held in a Caribbean nation. This conference is important to all of us-- not only because it strengthens our good relationships-- but also because it can strengthen these ties and our combined efforts to improve the security of our own nations-- as well as the regions that surround us. Again-- thank you Secretary Pared for making this conference more meaningful and relevant to the Caribbean nations through the efforts and support of your staff to plan and host this important event.

I would also like to welcome and thank all of you for finding the time in your busy schedules to participate in what I expect will be a very productive forum for the exchange of information and

ideas. It is a great honor for me to share in the discussions we will have today and tomorrow. We have a strong appreciation for our relations with your countries and seek to continue our bonds of friendship and partnership. I would also like to recognize and commend your efforts as a region to increase multilateral cooperation among neighbors against common threats to the security and well being of the Caribbean region.

As I prepared for this conference-- I was struck by the many ways in which the region has come together to collaborate for solutions to common concerns. Through your nations' participation in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)-- the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA)-- and the Regional Security System (RSS) of the Eastern Caribbean Islands-- as well as other efforts-- your leaders and institutions have shown the will for cooperation and integration-- laying the foundations for future combined efforts to address common security concerns. I am most impressed by the level of cooperation that has been achieved by so many diverse nations.

This was the 20th year of the Tradewinds Exercise-- which-- in itself-- is a testimony to your long history of cooperation. The Northern and Southern Phases of this year's exercise-- held in Bahamas and Antigua and Barbuda-- were successful by all accounts. For the next two years-- Tradewinds will continue to

focus on preparing security forces to support the 2007 World Cup of Cricket. The Tradewinds exercises will serve to test and challenge the region's security forces to craft collective doctrine and perfect tactics for security and disaster response operations - not only for the World Cup of Cricket-- but-- more importantly-- for a potentially wide variety of future contingencies.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM)-- the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA)-- and the Regional Security System (RSS)] and countless other efforts by your nations – that have come about through your initiative-- your efforts-- and your hard work – have laid the foundation for a truly regional team: a regional team that is postured to meet the changing threats of the 21st Century.

We will all agree-- in some form or another-- that today's threats are not simply defined in military terms. They include transnational terrorism-- narcoterrorism-- illicit trafficking-- forgery and money laundering-- kidnapping-- urban gangs-- radical movements-- poverty-- corruption-- natural disasters-- and mass migration. At a security conference held in Miami-- one Minister of Defense described these constantly shifting threats. He said-- "Given the nature of these new threats-- we have had to redefine the term security as we know it-- for it is no longer simply a matter of winning on the military battlefield. The new battlefield is

ungoverned spaces being exploited by illicit traffickers; the new battlefield is poverty and lack of opportunities that draw our youth toward international gangs; the new battlefield is the international criminal cartel that seeks the legal seams that exist between borders.”

Today’s and tomorrow’s threats are not static – they are extremely dynamic and they transcend all borders. As you know-- and as we’ve all seen in the counter drug effort-- individual nations acting in isolation will not resolve problems. They can’t because problems cross borders and migrate towards the path of least resistance. For this reason-- regional cooperation must link the efforts of each nation together-- improving and perfecting processes and systems for multinational approaches to secure the Caribbean and its nations.

The theme of this conference-- ***“Teaming for regional security to counter 21st Century transnational threats”*** has significance to each of us here. Through our discussions here we can increase our understanding of shared-- dynamic-- and multi-faceted threats and develop better ways to organize as a region to counter those threats – to close the seams that criminal and terrorist elements exploit.

I very much hope to see this conference continue as productive instrument to further your efforts towards greater regional

integration-- especially as it relates to our mutual security concerns.

In closing-- I know that we will all learn from each other during the course of this conference.

I look forward to a candid exchange. From my perspective as Commander of the US Southern Command—I would also like to know how we might better support your efforts to develop capabilities and continue to enhance regional cooperation.

I am hopeful that this conference will meet your expectations and that we will continue the dialogues held here in Santo Domingo to build on the initiative you have already taken towards greater regional cooperation.

Once again-- welcome and thank you for this opportunity to be with you.